DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 280 816 SP 028 696

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TITLE Using Mentors to Increase New Teacher Retention: The Mentor Teacher Induction Project.
PUB DATE Feb 87
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Arlington, VA, February 12-15, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teachers; College School Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Mentors; *Program Effectiveness; *Student Teachers; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Orientation; *Teacher Persistence
IDENTIFIERS *Beginning Teacher Induction

ABSTRACT

The Mentor Teacher Induction Project (MTIP) was designed to address the needs of beginning teachers during their "induction" into the teaching profession, and to increase the retention of new teachers in the profession. The central research question addressed by the project was: What will be the effect on beginning and student teachers of an induction program that emphasizes: (1) contact with a mentor (i.e., a competent and experienced teacher); (2) involvement of mentor teachers in seminars; and (3) opportunities for both formal and informal professional support (both student teachers and first year teachers)? A description is given of the elements of the program and how the program was implemented. An evaluation of the program was conducted by means of an attitude questionnaire that was administered to participants of the MTIP and also to a control group who did not participate in the project. The findings indicated that the first year teachers in the MTIP expressed to a greater extent the intent to continue teaching, compared to first year teachers not involved in the project. Both mentors and new teachers have provided consistently high ratings of project activities, suggesting they view them positively. (JD)

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USING MENTORS TO INCREASE NEW TEACHER RETENTION: THE MENTOR TEACHER INDUCTION PROJECT

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FEBRUARY, 1987

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INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the design and implementation of a model induction program that includes collaboration by university and school district personnel in new teacher professional development. An essential feature of the program is the involvement of mentors in the teacher training process.

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM: THE DEMAND FOR NEW TEACHERS VS. THE TEACHER RETENTION RATE

State Superintendent William Honig reports the need for over 100,000 new K-12 teachers in California by 1990, as many of the state's most experienced teachers retire, and other able teachers move into administration or other professions. During the 1985-86 academic year, San Francisco Unified School District hired over 650 new teachers. This turnover in the teacher population coincides with recent calls for change in the recruitment and retention of individuals who have the aptitude and potential to become outstanding teachers. While there is a need to attract qualified individuals to enter the teaching profession, recruitment will have little impact if beginning teachers are not retained in the profession.

Teacher attrition often occurs in the initial phase of teachers' careers as they attempt to "survive" in the classroom (Fuller and Bown, 1975). Ryan (1970, 1980) agrees that it is during this period of "induction" to teaching that beginning teachers often consider leaving the profession. Charters (1970) reports that only 40 percent of new teachers remain in the profession after the fifth year. Ryan (1979) notes that in the

1970s despite an uncertain job market and a shaky economy, that the drop out rate fluctuated from between six and ten percent per year. In more recent research, Schlechty and Vance (1983) report that 15% of new teachers leave after their first year of teaching as compared to the overall teacher turnover rate of 6%. In addition, another 15% will leave after their second year, and an additional 10% leave after their third year. To make the retention problem worse, Schlechty and Vance (1981) also report that there is a strong negative correlation between measured academic ability and retention in teaching. However, this trend may be questioned considering the research by Villeme and Hall (1983-84) who found that better-qualified education graduates are entering and intend to stay in the teaching field.

THE PROBLEMS OF NEW TEACHERS.

Why do new teachers leave the profession? What special problems are faced by beginning teachers? There is a sizeable body of literature that has addressed the problems of beginning teachers. Houston and Felder (1982) suggest that new teachers are faced with overwhelming problems. "It is a lonely time, an emotionally draining time, a frustrating experience" (p. 457). Bowers, Eicher, and Sacks (1983) describe similar emotional stress faced by student teachers. New teachers often feel isolated and lonely. Newberry (1978) reports that there often is a barrier between beginning and experienced teachers. New teachers are hesitant to ask for help while experienced teachers hesitate to offer assistance. While they may be isolated,

research suggests that there are major changes in the new teachers' attitudes and behaviors. Mahan and Lacefield (1978) suggest that new teachers abandon their preservice standards because they are so influenced by the new school setting. Zeichner and Tabachick (1981) contend that the effects of university teacher training are "washed-out" by school experience. Childres and Podemski (1982-83) note that the reality of the classroom often does not support the first year teacher's enthusiasm and idealism. In fact, they suggest, "These unrealistic expectations may be the teacher's own worst enemy, resulting in job dissatisfaction, loss of confidence, and burn-out" (p. 2).

Other studies, such as Veenman's (1984) comprehensive review of the problems of beginning teachers, have revealed the major concerns of beginning teachers to be student discipline, classroom management, dealing wih individual differences, assessing students, insufficient preparation time, developing relationships with colleagues, and lesson planning. Veenman also noted that there is a remarkable consistency in the conclusions of the studies he reviewed.

One major problem in addressing these needs is that new teachers typically are not faced with what Veenman refers to as "reality shock" until they step into the classroom as their preservice training ends. At that point, they are set adrift in the classroom and must sink or swim on their own. "No other profession allows novices to accept so much responsibility

without more practice and on-the-job supervision" (Stoddard, Losk, & Benson, 1984, P. 21). Similarly, Lortie (1975) notes that teaching seems to be the only profession where the beginner becomes fully responsible from the first working day and is expected to perform the same tasks as a 25-year veteran.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Mentor Teacher Induction Project (MTIP) is designed to address the needs of beginning teachers during their "induction" into the teaching profession. The primary objective of the project is to increase the retention of new teachers in the profession.

The central research question addresed by the project is: how will an induction program with a support system that emphasizes: 1) contact with a "mentor" (i.e., a competent and experienced teacher), 2) involvement of mentor teachers in seminars, and 3) opportunities for both formal and informal professional support affect beginning teachers (both student teachers and first year teachers)?

The major anticipated outcomes are (1) that a viable induction program model for new teachers that involves both university and school district personnel is developed, implemented, and judged to be successful by participants, and (2) that student and first year teachers develop (a) positive attitudes toward teaching, students, and the school, (b) express the intent to stay in teaching, and (c) judge their teaching experiences to be successful.

PROJECT ELEMENTS & IMPLEMENTATION

The Mentor Teacher Induction Project (MTIP) is a two phase program designed to meet the needs of both student and first year teachers. In the first phase, student teachers are matched with special "mentor" teachers who serve as resident or master teachers for the seven-week student teaching experience. These mentors, as well as those involved in Phase Two, are selected from a group of classroom teachers who apply to the project or are recommended by school district and university personnel. They are not necessarily designated as "mentor" teachers by their school district, although efforts are made to recruit officially district-designated mentors to be in the project. The "resident-mentors" not only provide their classrooms for the student teaching experience, but also are involved in the student teaching seminars. Each resident-mentor is required to attend a least three of the weekly student teacher seminars to present and discuss information. For their involvment in each student teaching session in Phase One of the project, resident-mentors receive a stipend of $125.

The format of the weekly student teaching seminars has two components. First, there is a structured period where a series of student teaching topics are presented by a university faculty member (typically the project director). Often, resident mentors make presentations on the seminar topic. The seminar topics include those designated by the student teachers as well as those identified in the literature on beginning teachers. Bowers, et al. (1983) and Morris and Morris (1980) identified the following

areas of student teacher concern that were seminar topics: maintaining discipline; relationships with peers, resident teachers and supervisors; learner achievement; content and instructional strategies. The second part of the seminar is a less structured period of time for student teachers to share problems and exchange ideas.

The Phase One MTIP program is different from the existing student program in four ways: (1) resident/mentor teachers are involved in the student teaching seminars, (2) the content of the seminars addresses specific student teacher concerns identified in the literature, (3) a specific "therapy" time is set aside when students can share problems and concerns, and (4) mentors (i.e., classroom teachers recognized as highly competent) are used as resident or master teachers.

The second phase of the program is designed to meet the needs of graduates of the university's teacher training program in their first year of teaching. The intent of Phase Two is to provide first year teachers with on-going support from both the university and mentor teachers by providing curriculum/management support as well as counseling in personal areas identified as troublesome for first year teachers. Each first year teacher is matched with a "mentor" teacher in a similar teaching position (grade level, geographic area, curricular emphasis, etc.). For their year long involvment in Phase Two of the project, mentors who work with first year teachers receive a stipend of $250. The mentor teacher support includes (1) regular and on-going contact with the first year teacher to discuss problems, concerns, or

questions, (2) visitations by first year teachers to mentors' classrooms and visitation by mentors to first year teachers' classrooms, and (3) involvement in MTIP sponsered seminars. In addition to the mentor support, first year teacher support includes monthly sessions with professional groups counselors, individual problem solving sessions with university faculty, and monthly seminars. Once again, the topics for the seminars are based on the expressed needs of the new teachers, as well as topics suggested in the literature. In his review of research on the problems of beginning teachers, Veenman (1984) identifies the following as problems most often percieved: classroom discipline, dealing with individual differences, student evaluation, relationships with parents, curricular organization, materials and supplies, and problems of individual students.

EVALUATION

One of the expected outcomes of the program was that student and first year teachers in the project would be more likely to express their intent to stay in teaching, compared to a similar group not in MTIP. These effects were measured by questionnaires. At the end of each semester, student teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire which asked them to agree or disagree with a series of statements, including the following: "I think it is likely I will make a career of being a classroom teacher." Responses were scored on a five point scale, ranging from five for a "strongly agree" to a one for a "strongly disagree." The results appear in Table One.

Table 1 Average Score for Student Teachers' Responses to "Intent to Stay in Teaching" Questionnaire Item

	Experimental	Control
Fall '85	4.8	4.6
Spring '86	4.7	4.8

On the same questionnaire, student teachers also were asked how many years they planned to be elementary classroom teachers. Responses were scores in the following manner:

years	score
0	0
1 - 3	1
4 - 5	2
6 - 10	3
>10	4

The results appear in Table Two.

Table 2 Average Score for Questionnaire Item "How many years do you plan to be an elementary classroom teacher?"

	Experimental	Control
Fall '85	2.5	2.6
Spring '86	3.5	2.7

Analysis of the data in the first table indicates that all groups of student teachers intend to remain in the teaching field. There were no statistically significant differences between control and experimental group scores. However, Statistical analysis of the data (T-tests) in the second table indicates that there were significant differences between the experimental and control group responses. Specifically, the

scores of the student teachers in the program during the spring semester were significantly higher when compared to the scores of student teachers in the control group. Thus, in at least one situation, student teachers in the program indicated an intent to remain in the field as classroom teachers for a longer period of time than those not in the program.

In June of 1986, a group of first year teachers not in the project, and the first year teachers in the project responded to a questionnaire which included the following question: Will you continue teaching? Possible responses were (1) no, (2) unsure, (3) yes, probably, and (4) yes, definitely. Results appear in Table Three.

Table 3 Average Score for First Year Teachers' Responses to "Will you continue teaching?" Questionnaire Item

Experimental Group	Control Group
mean = 3.0	mean = 2.3

Statistical analysis of the data (T-tests) indicates that the differences between the scores of the two groups approaches significance (P = .069). These results, like those from the student teaching questionnaire, provide partial support for the contention that those beginning teachers in the project are more likely to express the intent to remain in the field of teaching.

Another of the expected outcomes of the project was that MTIP student and first year teachers would be more likely to judge their teaching experiences as successful, compared to a

control group not in MTIP. Once again, these effects were measured by questionnaires. At the end of each semester, student teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire which asked them to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I would judge this student teaching experience to be a success." Responses were scored on a five point Liekert scale, ranging from 5 for a "strongly agree" to 1 for a "strongly disagree." Results appear in the Table Four.

Table 4 Average Score for Questionnaire Item "I would judge this student teaching experience to be a success."

	Experimental	Control
Fall '85	4.8	4.4
Spring '86	4.7	4.5

Analysis of the data in this table indicates that all groups of student teachers judged their student teaching experiences to be a success. There were no differences between experimental and control groups.

The June 1986 first year teaching questionnaire also included a question which asked the new teachers to judge their first year of teaching on a four point scale from excellent (4) to poor (1). Results appear in the Table Five.

Table 5 Average Scores for First Year Teachers' Responses to Questionnaire Item "Your frist year of teaching can be described as: Excellent/Good/Fair/Poor."

Experimental Group	Control Group
mean = 2.6	mean = 2.2

Statistical analysis of the data (T-test) indicates that the differences between the scores of the two groups are not significant. Both groups tended to judge their first year of teaching in only moderately successful terms.

A third expected outcome was that student and first year teachers would develop positive attitudes towards teaching, students, and school. In the first year of the project, these effects were measured by standardized assessment instruments. (i.e., the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory and the Pupil Control Index). The MTAI is designed to measure "those attitudes of a teacher which predict how well he will get along with pupils in interpersonal relationships, and indirectly how well satisfied he will be with teaching as a vocation" (Cook, Leeds, and Callis, 1951, P. 3). The range of possible scores on the MTAI is from a high of plus 150 to a low of minus 150. The MTAI was administered to both a control and experimental groups of student teachers before and after their student teaching experiences during the fall semester of 1985, and the spring semester of 1986. The results appear in the Table Six.

Table Six Student Teachers' Average MTAI Scores

	Before Student Teaching	After Student Teaching
Controls (Fall)	49.8	45.5
Controls (Spring)	40.7	31.7
Experimental (Fall)	36.3	30.3
Experimental (Spring)	51.9	52.7

Statistical analysis of the data (T-tests) indicates that there were no significant differences between pre and post scores for any of the groups. However, simple visual analysis of the MTAI scores indicates that generally scores seem to decrease (in three of the four cases) as student teachers tended to become more teacher centered and less student centered after the student teaching experience. In other words, and not unexpectedly, student teachers tended to have a more negative attitude towards students and teaching following the student teaching experience. The exception is the second semester experimental group, whose MTAI scores, which are vrtually the same, indicate an unchanged attitude. While not statistically significant, these results seem to indicate the possibility of some program impact upon student teachers' attitudes during the second semester.

Another standardized assessment questionnaire, the Pupil Control Index (PCI) also was used to measure subjects' attitudes. The PCI measures the extent to which teachers view teaching, particularly student control, in either a custodial or humanistic manner (Willower, Eidell, and Hoy, 1973). The PCI was administered to both a control group and an experimental group of student teachers during the spring semester. Results appear in Table Seven.

Table 7 Student Teachers' Average PCI Scores, Spring 1986

	Before Student Teaching	After Student Teaching
Control	79.6	73.0
Experimental	72.7	71.7

Statistical analysis of the results from the student teachers' PCI scores indicated there were significant differences in the pre and post scores of the control group of student teachers. Scores from the control group were significantly lower after their student teaching experience. The experimental group of student teachers' PCI scores did not change.

Finally, was the project judged to be a success by the participants? Following each project activity, every participant was asked to evaluate the activity. While there were suggestions for improvement and modifications, many of which have been included in the second year of the project, participants' responses to the question, "Is this project a success," were a consistent and definite "yes."

SUMMARY

By way of review, the intent of this project was to (1) develop a viable induction program model for new teachers that involved both university and school district personnel that is judged to be successful by participants, and (2) have participants develop positive attitudes towards school and teaching, express the intent to stay in teaching, and judge their teaching experiences to be a success.

An induction model was developed and implemented. The statistically significant effects of the program included the following: (1) during the second semester, the attitudes of student teachers in the project, as measured by the Pupil Control Index, did not shift from a more humanistic to a more custodial

orientation, while the attitudes of the student teachers in the control group did change in what could be defined as a negative manner; this can be viewed as a positive program effect; (2) during the second semester, those student teachers in the project expressed the intention to remain classroom teachers for a greater period of time than those student teachers not in the project. This can be viewed as a positive program effect. The following was an outcome that approached statistical significance: those first year teachers in the project expressed to a greater extent the intent to continue teaching, compared to first year teachers not in the project. Finally, participants (i.e., both mentors and new teachers) have provided consistently high ratings of project activities, suggesting they view them positively.

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